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ABSTRACT

Proposed 1989 standards will raise the passing score on the College Level Academic Skills Test from 275 to 295 in computation, from 270 to 295 in reading and writing, and from 4 to 5 on the essay test. A study was conducted at Miami-Dade Community College (MDCC) to examine the impact of these proposed standards on the passing rates of students taking the CLAST for the first time and those retaking it. An analysis of the test scores of students who wrote the CLAST in fall 1986 revealed the following: (1) of the 980 MDCC students taking the CLAST for the first-time, 71% passed the exam, 16.4% failed one subtest, 8.4% failed two subtests, and 3.6% failed more than two subtests; (2) had the 1989 standards been in effect, 29.1% would have passed the exam, 25.8% would have failed one subtest, 20.8% would have failed two subtests, and 24.3% would have failed three or more subtests; (3) of the 278 students who failed the CLAST for the first time in 1986, 216 retook the exam during the following year; of these 77.3% eventually passed all four subtests and 18.5% passed three; and (4) had the 1989 standards been in force, only 8.3% of the students who retook the CLAST would have passed. (AAC)

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IMPLICATIONS FOR CLAST RETAKE PERFORMANCE USING PROPOSED 1989 STANDARDS

Research Report No. 88-10

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Implications for CLAST Retake Performance Using Proposed 1989 Standards

Several studies have been conducted at Miami-Dade and at other community colleges which address the question of success on the CLAST for those students whose initial performance was below levels which permit them to pass all four of the subtests. For example, Belcher (1986) showed that of the first-time examinees who failed the CLAST during Fall, 1984, 73% of those who initially failed one subtest had retaken and passed all four during the next year, compared to 19% of those who had failed two subtests. Similarly, Einspruch (1988) showed that for Fall, 1986 first-time examinees, 95% of those who had initially failed one subtest had passed all four one year later, compared to 60% of those who had initially failed two subtests. These important findings suggest that with the current passing standards all but about 10% of the students who initially attempt the examination have passed all four subtests within one year. It should be emphasized that the overwhelming majority of those who retake and pass the examination are students who initially fail only one of the subtests. Those who fail two or more do considerably less well upon retaking the exam.

Research Question and Discussion of Findings

This study examined the question of the impact of the 1989 standards on the number and percentage of retake examinees passing the CLAST. Table 1 summarizes the number of subtests failed by the first-time examinees who wrote the examination in September, 1986, given both the 1986 standards and the proposed 1989 standards. Both Miami-Dade Community College (M-DCC) and statewide data are presented.[1] This table is consistent with a number of other tables developed by both M-DCC and the state during recent years. What needs to be emphasized is that the percentage failing two or more tests jumps dramatically when going from 1986 to 1989 standards. Since most of the people who retake and pass the examination under 1986 standards are

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[1] Statewide data were taken from the December, 1986 CLASP Office Report for the September, 1986 administration of CLAST.

those who initially fail only one subtest, a much larger number of failures can be anticipated for retake examinees, since a greater number of examinees will initially fail more than one subtest (assuming no improvement in student performance).

Tables 2 and 3 detail only M-DCC performance. Table 2 shows the number of subtests failed by the 278 students who did not pass all four parts of the CLAST on their first attempt. Of these students, 57.9% failed one subtest given 1986 standards, but only 10.1% would have failed one subtest given 1989 standards. Table 3 illustrates the performance of the 216 students who retook the CLAST during the following year. Of these students 167 (77.3%) passed given 1986 standards. Yet if the 1989 standards were applied, only 18 (8.3%) of those students would have succeeded on their retake effort.

It is clear from these figures that the 1989 standards will severely impact the success rate of those students who retake the examination. Therefore, the notion that these standards should be permitted to be raised in 1989 since so many students pass on their second attempt, is only applicable if one examines their performance given 1986 standards. There is a vast and importantly different impact for student performance based on 1989 standards.

Methodology

Data for students who took the CLAST for the first-time during Fall, 1986 were obtained from the M-DCC CLAST research file. For the 980 students who were examined during this administration, the number failing 0 - 4 subtests, given 1986 standards was computed. This was compared to the distribution for student performance statewide. Next, those students who failed at least one subtest were selected from the group, and for these 278 students this same distribution was again computed. Finally, for the students who retook the CLAST (216 for this administration), a distribution of the number of subtests eventually passed was computed. These computations were again made using the proposed 1989 standards.

Results

Of the students who wrote the CLAST for the first-time during Fall, 1986, 71% passed the exam (defined as passing all four subtests), 16.4% failed one subtest, 8.4% failed two subtests, and 3.6% failed more than two subtests. Statewide, 82.8% of the first-time examinees passed the CLAST, 10.7% failed one subtest, 4.0% failed two subtests, and 2.2% failed more than two subtests. Considering performance of these students (i.e., assuming that student performance remained constant), had the 1989 standards been in effect, then at M-DCC 29.1% would have passed the CLAST, 25.8% would have failed one subtest, 20.8% would have failed two subtests, and 24.3% would have failed more than two subtests. Statewide, given constant student performance and imposition of the 1989 standards 44.1% would have passed the exam, 26.9% would have failed one subtest, 14.0% would have failed two subtests, and 14.8% would have failed more than two subtests. Table 1 details these results.

During the Fall, 1986 CLAST administration, 278 of the 980 first-time test takers failed one or more subtests. Table 2 illustrates that of these 278 students, 57.9% failed one subtest, 29.5% failed two subtests, and 12.6% failed more than two subtests. Given constant student performance and 1989 standards, 10.1% would have failed one subtest, 26.6% would have failed two subtests, and 63.3% would have failed more than two subtests.

Of the 278 students who failed the CLAST for the first-time during Fall, 1986, 216 had retaken the CLAST during the next year (Spring, 1987, Summer, 1987 or Fall, 1987). Of these 216 retakers, 77.3% eventually passed all four subtests, 18.5% passed three subtests, and 4.2% were still required to pass two or more subtests. If these students were writing with 1989 standards in effect, then only 8.3% would have eventually passed all four subtests during this period, 15.7% would have passed three subtests, and 75.9% would still be required to pass two or more subtests. See Table 3 for results.

Table 1

Number of CLAST Subtests Failed by September 1986
First-Time Examinees, Given 1986 and 1989 Standards

	1986 Standards Computation = 275 Reading = 270 Writing = 270 Essay = 4				1989 Standards* Computation = 295 Reading = 295 Writing = 295 Essay = 5			
	M-DCC		State**		M-DCC		State**	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Failed 4 Subtests	8	0.8	85	0.7	96	9.8	710	5.8
Failed 3 Subtests	27	2.8	199	1.6	142	14.5	1,122	9.2
Failed 2 Subtests	82	8.4	498	4.1	204	20.8	1,723	14.0
Failed 1 Subtest	161	16.4	1,326	10.8	253	25.8	3,305	26.9
Failed 0 Subtests	702	71.6	10,170	82.8	285	29.1	5,418	44.1
Total Tested	980	100.0	12,278	100.0	980	100.0	12,278	100.0

*1989 Standards assume constant student performance.
**Data Source: CLASP Office Report for September, 1986 Administration, (December 1986).

Table 2

Miami-Dade Community College
First-Time Examinees
Who Failed at Least 1 Subtest (September, 1986)
(N=278)

	1986 Standards		1989 Standards	
	Computation = 275 Reading = 270 Writing = 270 Essay = 4		Computation = 295 Reading = 295 Writing = 295 Essay = 5	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Failed 4 Subtests	8	2.9	86	30.9
Failed 3 Subtests	27	9.7	90	32.4
Failed 2 Subtests	82	29.5	74	26.6
Failed 1 Subtest	161	57.9	28	10.1

Table 3

Number of Subtests Failed by September 1986
Miami-Dade Community College
First-Time Examinees Who Retook CLAST
During the Following Year
(N=216)

	1986 Standards		1989 Standards	
	Computation = 275 Reading = 270 Writing = 270 Essay = 4		Computation = 295 Reading = 295 Writing = 295 Essay = 5	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Failed 4 Subtests Upon Retake	1	0.5	46	21.3
Failed 3 Subtests Upon Retake	3	1.4	50	23.1
Failed 2 Subtests Upon Retake	5	2.3	68	31.5
Failed 1 Subtest Upon Retake	40	18.5	34	15.7
Failed 0 Subtests Upon Retake	167	77.3	18	8.3

Appendix

In order to answer the question, "How many times did the students who failed the CLAST during the Fall, 1986 administration retake the exam during the following year?", the following table was generated.

Number of Times the CLAST was Retaken
During the Following Year
By Students Who Failed in Fall, 1986
(N=278)

Number of Students	Total Number of Times CLAST was Retaken
62	0 (i.e., did not retake)
156	1 (i.e., retook once)
45	2 (i.e., retook twice)
15	3 (i.e., retook three times)

References

Belcher, M. J. (1986). A longitudinal follow-up of students who failed the CLAST in Fall, 1984. (Research Report No. 86-20). Office of Institutional Research, Miami-Dade Community College, Miami, Florida.

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